



## **Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership**

A Project of the Afterschool Alliance and the JCPenney Afterschool Fund

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### **Afterschool Alliance Names Camdenton R-III's Sherry Comer 'Afterschool Ambassador'**

#### ***Comer to Promote Afterschool During 2003/2004 School Year***

September 10, 2003— The Afterschool Alliance today announced that it has chosen Sherry Comer of Camdenton R-III Schools to serve a second one-year term as an Afterschool Ambassador. Comer is one of 25 Afterschool Ambassadors selected from across the nation, and one of just seven chosen to serve a second term during the 2003-2004 school year. Her focus as an Ambassador will be to build grassroots support for afterschool programs. Comer's ambassadorship is sponsored by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund.

"We are so proud to have Mrs. Comer on our team again this year," Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Judy Y. Samelson said. "She has an impressive record at Camdenton R-III Schools and in the community, and distinguished herself last year as an Afterschool Ambassador. We are delighted to extend the appointment for a second year. In communities across the nation, more and more afterschool programs are helping kids succeed in school and in life. We owe a great debt to leaders like Comer and the Project PASS Team and we are delighted that she will continue to help us spread the word about the great need for more afterschool programs in America today."

Afterschool Ambassadors serve one-year or two-year terms organizing public events, communicating with policy makers and building community support for afterschool. Each will plan a major event for *Lights On Afterschool!*, the Afterschool Alliance's October 9 nationwide rally for afterschool.

"I'm honored to continue as an Ambassador. It is a great opportunity to showcase the achievements of afterschool programs across the state of Missouri and at the same time show the need for additional quality afterschool programs," Comer said. "Afterschool programs are vital to the youth of our state. Afterschool programs are key to the safety of our youth and enable our students to receive needed academic assistance and also allow the opportunity for many students to become engaged in enrichment activities and cultural experiences that are not readily accessible for communities."

As part of the Afterschool Ambassador program, the JCPenney Afterschool Fund will contribute \$1,000 to Camdenton R-III Schools afterschool program, Project PASS. The contribution is just one part of the retailer's ongoing \$30 million commitment to afterschool issues. The local JCPenney Camdenton Catalog Store representatives, Jacquie and Roger Samuelson will present the \$1,000 contribution to the students of Project PASS at the October 9<sup>th</sup> **Lights On Celebration!**

"The Afterschool Ambassadors do an extraordinary job of building support from lawmakers and the public for quality afterschool programs," said Ed Solczak, Director of the JCPenney Afterschool Fund. "Afterschool programs help children flourish while keeping them safe after the school day ends. JCPenney and the JCPenney Afterschool Fund are deeply committed to afterschool programs. They make good sense for our children, their parents and their communities"

Nationwide, as many as 15 million latchkey children have no adult supervision during non-school hours. Afterschool programs offer young people safe, enriching, fun and engaging places to spend the afternoons once the school day is over. Research shows that afterschool programs are a good investment. They improve academic achievement, keep kids safe, help working families, and teach children social skills and conflict resolution. Afterschool programs also lead to increased school attendance and lower dropout rates.

Camdenton R-III Schools Project PASS (Partners Assisting Student Success) is an innovative community-based after school program resulting from a Federal grant. The three year \$1.5 million dollar grant was funded through the U.S. Department of Education's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers Program. Camdenton R-III Schools was one of only five Missouri schools awarded this prestigious grant in school year 2000. The program's primary goal is to provide students and their families with the skills, resources, and support necessary for success in school as well as in life. Project PASS collaborates with various community agencies, support groups, businesses, clubs, and community members to provide activities and classes.

"Sherry Comer's strong leadership has been the driving force for the success of Camdenton R-III School District's after school program", said Camdenton R-III Superintendent Ron Hendricks. "Our students, who need some additional help with their studies, have benefited enormously from her tireless efforts, and we are delighted that she is receiving well deserved recognition."

Last year, Comer and the Project PASS team organized a successful *Lights On Afterschool!* event that involved students, parents, and the Camdenton community. Comer also joined a delegation from Missouri visiting Washington, D.C. for a day-long "Afterschool for All" Challenge on Capitol Hill, worked with numerous local and state Legislators to increase funding for afterschool programs across the state of Missouri and the United States, and presented at several state and national conferences.

*The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization supported by a group of public, private, and nonprofit entities dedicated to ensuring that all children and youth have access to afterschool programs by 2010. The Alliance is proud to count among its founding partners the C.S. Mott Foundation, U.S. Department of Education, the JCPenney Afterschool Fund, Open Society Institute/The After-School Corporation, the*

*Entertainment Industry Foundation and the Creative Artists Agency Foundation. More information is available at [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org)*

*The JCPenney Afterschool Fund supports the Alliance's Afterschool Ambassador program, and is National Presenting Sponsor of Lights On Afterschool! this year. The JCPenney Afterschool Fund is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization contributing financial support to five of America's leading after school advocates – the YMCA of the USA, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, 4-H, Junior Achievement and the Afterschool Alliance. Support from the JCPenney Afterschool Fund helps provide safe, fun and educational after school programs and raise awareness of the need for more such programs across the country.*

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